



**North American Sankethi Association (NASA Inc.)**  
**3943 White Rose Way, Ellicott City, MD 21042**  
<http://www.sankethi.org>

Dear fellow Sankethis:

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On behalf of the NASA Board of Directors I would like to wish you and your families a very Happy New Year! I look forward to the year ahead and all the activities that we as Sankethis can participate in together. The issue of communication (i.e., through newsletters, our website, etc.) was highlighted as one of the top five initiatives to be explored by the current Board and we are working hard to pursue this initiative and better serve the needs of our community. I am happy to report that we have had frequent communications among our Board members and have also improved our communication with the community as a whole through web news updates at [www.sankethi.org](http://www.sankethi.org), group e-mails, our newsletter, telephone calls, and personal meetings.

Another major initiative we have pursued is facilitating NASA Regional Meetings to promote more numerous and frequent Sankethi gatherings. We had two great meetings, one in Middletown, CT in September during the Navarathri festival, and another one in Toronto, Canada (the first such meeting there) in October. Both were very well attended and represented new energy from many new faces while our veteran Sankethis attended in good numbers as well. We have gained eight new life members in the process and I would like to offer our warmest welcome to all of them. Please see more details on our newest life members in the following pages. We are now looking forward to the next regional meeting in Houston, TX during Sankranthi on Jan 13, 2007. Drs. Eshwari and Prasanna Murthy have kindly agreed to host the meeting. This is a great opportunity to meet many Sankethi families there who may not have had the chance to attend our annual meetings. I would like to urge you all to attend in large numbers. We have been exploring several new locations for our 2007 annual event. We have found a couple of great locations but the major challenge has been around the issue of providing vegetarian Indian food due to rigid restrictions against catering outside food or bringing in our own cooks. We hope to sort this out soon. Lakshmi and Shubha are working on organizing age stratified activities for the event and a preview of the kinds of activities we can look forward to during the annual get-together is given in this newsletter. We certainly look forward to your participation in large numbers at the annual meeting.

The Sankethi Genealogy Team has developed a new form to help in data gathering and an update has been posted on the website. We encourage all Sankethis to take advantage of this NASA initiative. Further, we have plans to upgrade our website and we hope to report good progress on this and from all our working groups during the next annual meeting.

Due to health reasons Rudrapatna Govindaraju has transferred the Treasurer's responsibility to Mahesh Rao. Raju has kindly agreed to continue on the Board and help us in all Tax matters. I am grateful to Mahesh for his willing support and flexibility in this regard. Also, due to his increased professional commitments Shekhar Nagendra has stepped down from the Board. We are exploring the possibility of finding another member to take on his responsibilities on the Board. Finally, we have located the NASA Federal Tax Exemption Certificate and we are working on filing tax returns for the previous years.

I am very fortunate to be working with a committed and dynamic Board of Directors, and having the great support and guidance of several past NASA Presidents has been invaluable. With this help and your active participation in our activities I look forward to another exciting year!

Best regards,

S. Sridhara  
President

## **2007 Annual Meeting Update:**

Our next Annual Meeting will be held over a weekend during the Summer of 2007. The program will include our traditional favorites as well as a few new twists. The cultural program will showcase our community's talents and rich heritage with both solo and group performances in classical music and dance. We hope to develop programming about literary and visual cultural arts as well. Social activities, specific to age groups, will include a teen day hike, a "singles" night out, and a children's fun fair. Location permitting, we hope to offer swimming, sports, and outdoor leisure activities for all ages. We also have several intergenerational community-building activities planned to help us get to know each other better and sustain our ties with each other. The religious programs will include group chanting, puja, bhajan, and yoga. Last, but certainly not least, we look forward to the children's program highlighting the budding talents of our youngest members. It will be a culturally-oriented, fun-filled, rejuvenating and exciting time! Please stay tuned for details about the date and location of the 2007 Annual Meeting!! We hope to see you there!!!

## **Upcoming Regional Events:**

### **NASA Regional Event: Sankranthi Celebration in Texas!**

**Location:** Houston, TX – events will be held at a host family's residence.

#### **Sankethi Host Family:**

Drs Eshwari and Prasanna Murthy  
1815 Sugar Crossing Drive,  
Sugarland TX 77478  
Tel: 281 265 4138

**Date:** Saturday 1/13/07, 11AM-7PM (This is a long week end for many with Monday being Dr. Martin Luther King Day.)  
Weather is expected to be pleasant.

#### **Helpful Information:**

1. Houston Hobby is the closest airport to the Murthy's home and Southwest offers cheap fares to this airport. Houston International airport is also relatively convenient, though it is a bit farther away.
2. Those traveling to Houston from out of town are welcome to arrive Friday night and remain on Saturday night. Local Sankethi families have graciously agreed to host confirmed guests on Friday and Saturday nights. Please confirm your attendance early so that we can make arrangements for your accommodation.
3. Please feel free to call the host family for more local information and to contact members of the BOD with other questions regarding the regional meeting.

#### **Program includes:**

- \*Introduction and socializing with local families
- \*Classical and light music programs
- \*Skits on Sankethi lifestyle
- \*Children's program
- \*Outdoor time at a nearby local park
- \*Lunch, snacks & coffee, and dinner (all arranged by local families and catered from Udipi Restaurant)

In addition to Sankethi families in Houston, we look forward to seeing many Sankethi families from Dallas, Austin, and other cities in Texas. We are also expecting (and hoping) to have many out of state families in attendance, of which the NASA President and First Lady and Director Sathyanarayana and family are currently confirmed.

***Please note: If you are interested in hosting a Regional Get-Together in your area, please contact S.N.Sathyanarayana at 570-708 0175 Stansatya@hotmail.com.***

**Reflections on Sankranthi**  
**Makara Sankranthi as I remember it..... By Kusuma Hangal**

We Hindus celebrate Sankranthi during the month of January. This year it falls on Sunday, January 14th. Sankranthi is so called because the day takes you from darkness to light. On this day, the Sun starts on his northward journey by entering the **Makara** sign of zodiac. From this day onwards the sun with respect to the earth starts moving towards the north signaling the approach of summer, also called as [Uttarayana](#). **The meaning of Sankranthi is all about change for good.**

I grew up in a village called Keralapura. On this day of Sankranthi we would bathe in the Kaveri River and on Rathasapthami day, we would bathe with “yekkada yele” on our heads. Then we would wear new clothes and Father would perform a special puja. Traditional food for this festival would be Pongal (made out of rice and moongdal cooked together with jeera and pepper) and Sweet Pongal (rice and moongdal cooked together with Jaggary added). In the evening, women and children would go to other Sankethi homes to give yellu (made of white sesame, dry coconut pieces, sugar candy or jaggary pieces and fried Bengal gram and roasted peanuts), coconut, fruits, Sugarcane pieces (Kabbu) and “sakkare achhu” (sugar blocks made by melting sugar and then molded into different shapes). I remember the many animal shapes and Vrindavana sakkare achhu. In the evening, farmers would wash and decorate bulls and take them on a procession around the village and there would be a contest for the best (healthiest) bull. Farmers welcome Sankranthi as it brings prosperity and good fortune for them. As it is the harvest season, newly harvested grains were the main ingredients in all the foods cooked on this auspicious day. On the second day, young girls would go to all Sankethi homes to give yellu also called as “bombe yellu.”

Sankranthi is also a holy day for many other reasons. It was the day on which Adi Shankara took sanyasa. On this day it is customary to offer a mixture of Jaggary and sesame (til). Jaggary is sweet and is a symbol of **Love**. Til symbolizes ‘**sneha**’ which means friendship. Therefore the offering of the Jaggary-til mixture means offering to the people love surcharged with friendliness. The message is: **Develop harmony towards every one**. Sankranthi is special to Sankethis but it also celebrated all over India in different ways but with the same overall theme. I wish all of you A HAPPY MAKARA SANKRANTHI! Useful sites to learn more about Sankranthi are Wikipedia and [members.rediff.com/saivani/Sankranthi.htm](http://members.rediff.com/saivani/Sankranthi.htm)

**Regional Get Together Reports:**

**NASA Navarathri Function Held at the Hindu Temple in Middletown CT on September 30, 2006**

(Reported by Keshava Kumar, Secretary, NASA BOD)

**Master of Ceremonies: Puneeth B Kumar**

**Program:**

12:00 - 1:00	Arrival/Check in/Light Lunch
1:00 - 1:15	Invocation and Welcome speech by NASA President
1:15 - 1:45	Kids Program Mahathi and Apoorva: Violin Kethaki, Malaya and Ameya: Hindustani Music
1:45 - 3:00	Bharatha Vachana Mrs. Geetha Dathari & Prof. Dathatri
3:00 - 3:15	Coffee Break
3:15 - 4:15	Music Concert <u>Vocal</u> : Mrs. Sandhya Nagaraj, <u>Violin</u> : Deepak Varma, <u>Tabala</u> : Balakrishna Annigeri
4:15 - 4:30	Why we do Navarathri? - Dr. Sheenu Srinivasan
4:30 - 5:15	Lalitha Sahasranama group chanting by devotees
5:15 - 5:30	Bombe (Doll) Arathi
5:30 - Close	Closing remarks and Dinner

We are happy to report that we had a great get-together with friends that came from as close as Middletown CT and as far away as India. The event was attended by over 70 adults and children. Three new life members were welcomed to NASA: Leela and Neelakantiah, Vijaya and Janardhan, and Sudha and Nagaraj. Our get-together started off with a delicious lunch. We had Gojjavaalakki and mosaranna for lunch along with home made banana chips. Cultural events started with an Invocation and welcome speech by NASA President S. Sridhara. It was followed by a good Violin Duet by Mahathi Kumar and Apoorva Ramesh. They played a medley of tunes including Lightly Row, French Folk Song, Ode to Joy, and the theme from Titanic. We then had the pleasure of listening to a wonderful performance of Hindustani music by Ameya Shashank, Malay Shashank and Ketaki Shashank. They sang 'Aaj more mandir aaoji' and 'kyon tum rooth gaye' in raag bihag. This was

followed by Vishvaroop Darshana of Lord Krishna through Bharatha Vachana. We don't think our community needs description of how joyful it was to listen to Bharatha Vachana by Mrs. Geetha Dathari & Prof. Dathatri.

The audience took a break to enjoy some snacks and coffee. A music concert followed this coffee break. We were fortunate to find our own Sankethi singer Mrs. Sandhya Nagaraj who now lives in Stamford, CT accompanied by Deepak Varma of Middletown CT on violin and Balakrishna Annigeri from Glastonbury CT on tabla. We heard several music pieces appropriate to the festival season on deities including Lord Ganesha, Goddess Sharadadevi, and Goddess Lalitha.

Mrs. Nagaraj sang the following songs:

- 1) Vaatapi Ganapathim bhaje Hamsadhvani Deekshitar
- 2) Annapoorne Vishalakshi Saama Deekshitar
- 3) Shringapuradhiswari Kalyani Padmacharan
- 4) Naarayana ShuddhaDhanyaasi Purandaradasa
- 5) ShriChamundeshwari Bilahari Mysore Vasudevacharya
- 6) Krishnaneebegane YamanKalyani Vyasaraaya
- 7) ShriChakra raaja Raagamalike Agasthiyar
- 8) Manikya Veenam Raagamalike Kaalidaasa(This composition is from Shyamala Dandaka)

Amurtha Vishwanath thanked the artists and expressed interest in listening to their music in future events. We then had the opportunity to listen to Dr. Sheenu Srinivasan speak about the significance of Navarathri and why we do Doll Arathi. His thoughts on how no program on television can come even close to capturing the vibrant nature of the Navarathri celebrations and the Doll Arathi were really eye opening.

Devotees then chanted Lalitha Sahasranama in a large group and this was followed by Doll Arathi. The evening concluded with dinner which included authentic Chomai (or Ottu shavige), ambode, majjige huli, obbattu and other delicious Sankethi favorites. All the food items were lovingly prepared by our own Sankethi members. A vote of thanks was proposed by S. Sridhara and soon after this goodbyes and clean-up followed.

We thank all volunteers for making this event possible. All expenses for this event were covered by donations. Some pictures taken at the event have been posted on the website.

**Mrs. Sandhya Nagaraj:** Mrs. Sandhya Nagaraj, a Sankethi, hails from Channarayapatna in India. She secured 2<sup>nd</sup> rank from the Karnataka Education board in "Vidwath," a State Level Exam. She was trained under well-known artists like Vidwan R.K.Srikantan, Vidwan R.K.Suryanarayana, D.J.Balakrishna (disciple of T.V.Shankaranarayana), and Vidushi Kiranavali Vidyashankar. In addition, Mrs. Nagaraj was named Grade "B High" Artist at All India Radio. She has given various concerts in Karnataka and has also performed in San Diego, California. She can be reached by phone at 203-588-1686 and by e-mail at [sandhya\\_pathra@yahoo.com](mailto:sandhya_pathra@yahoo.com).

### **Inaugural Canadian Sankethi Deepawali Function Held at Meadowvale Village Hall in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada (Toronto Region) on October 28, 2006**

(Reported by Sri Shreekanth)

We are very happy to share that the "First Canadian Deepawali Get-Together" was a grand success. This program was sponsored by NASA and 55 people, including children, attended the event. Several founding members and some members of the current board of directors of NASA graced the occasion with their presence. By the end of the get-together, three families became life members of NASA.

The program started off with light snacks such as Ambode, cookies, and coffee. This was followed by Lakshmi Pooja performed by children. Arrangements for the Lakshmi Pooja were made by Divakar Rudrapatna's family and Dr. Ramaswamy brought photos of goddess Lakshmi to be given to every child. The Pooja was conducted by Shri Harave Keshava Murthy, a very senior Sankethi visiting from India. The Pooja was followed by Purusha Sookta chanting led by Dr. Jayaram, Divakar Rudrapatna, Shri Keshava Murthy and joined by many in the hall. Smt. Vimala Srinivasa coordinated the singing of bhajans by participants subsequent to Veda chanting.

The spiritual activities were followed by an inaugural session conducted by Smt. Kavitha Prakash as the MC. The program started with an invocation by Smt. Sudha Subbanna and a welcome address by Dr. Ramaswamy, a member of the organizing committee. Dr. Ramaswamy introduced the other members of the organizing committee, Shri Divakar Rudrapatna, Smt. Jayashree Hanasoge and Shri Sreekanth, and welcomed the distinguished guests Shri Keshava Murthy, a senior member of the Bettadapura Sankethi community, Dr. Sridhara, the current president of NASA, and other dignitaries. Dr. Sridhara

inaugurated the program by lighting the lamp. Shri Harave Keshava Murthy enlightened the audience with a key note address titled “Sankethis – A Historical Perspective.” He spoke about the origin of Sankethis as well as the contribution of Sankethis to the greater society. He also spoke about the contribution of renowned Sankethis in the contemporary world. Dr. Sridhara spoke about NASA, its objectives and the socio-cultural benefit of being a member of NASA for all of us. The inaugural session concluded with a vote of thanks by Shri Divakar Rudrapatna.

The inaugural session was followed by lunch which provided a very good opportunity for all Sankethi members to get to know each other. The lunch coordination was done by Smt. Anupama Nagaraj and Smt. Sudha Subbanna. In addition, many volunteers had prepared delicious items from home for the event. Kosambari, Saaru, Anna, Puliogere, Majjige Huli, Chapathi, Chole, Champakali, Mosaranna, Pickles, Banana chips, Adike etc. were available and everyone enjoyed the food.

During the post-lunch session, Shri Keshava Sundareshan gave an informative demonstration/presentation on “Sankethi Genealogy.” This presentation was followed by a melodious “Bhaava-Geethe” presented by Smt. Vinutha Sheshachala who entertained all of us. Prof. Ramaswamy exposed the myths of Sankethi foods and enlightened us about the good, and the not so good aspects of our food. He discussed strategies for eating healthy while staying away from unhealthy food. This interesting presentation will soon be available in the NASA webpage.

Smt. Vinutha Sheshachala organized a wonderful entertainment program featuring various attendees. First, all the Sankethi children introduced themselves and their parents one by one in SANKETHI. All our hearts filled with joy listening to our children speaking Sankethi in front of so many people. This was followed by a children’s variety show that included music, dance, and comedy routines. Smt. Lakshmi Ramaswamy conducted a Yoga demonstration highlighting simple asanas that can be practiced by most people. Her demonstration emphasized how accessible Yoga can be and how it is an effective way to maintain a healthy lifestyle. There was also a very effective multimedia presentation titled “Ganesha vandana” which involved participation from several children and was presented in a compelling manner incorporating unique costumes, dance and music. In summary, children and adults alike performed with enthusiasm and were cheered by the audience.

The final piece of the entertainment program featured a music concert by Smt. Geetha Dathatri which kept everyone glued to their chairs. In hearing this music, audience members wished the concert lasted much longer than it did. Smt. Geetha Dathatri sang various Devara Naamas scripted by the late Birur Chidambara Jois and composed by her father, the late Vidwan Shri Ramasastry.

The official program was concluded by a vote of thanks by Shri Sreekanth who commended all the volunteers, attendees, performers, donors and NASA.

Following the official program was dinner for all attendees. Idli/Sambar, Saaru, Anna, Carrot Halwa etc. were provided for dinner. Some entertainment was incorporated into this dinner hour as well with Kannada songs lyrically translated to Sankethi and some talented mono-acting by Lakshmish Koushik. The function concluded around 6:30pm.

Shri Subbanna from Buffalo and Smt. Geeth and Shri Vijaya Rao from Indiana donated \$100 each on the spot to make up the cost of the event. Smt. Vimala Srinivasa donated \$20. We the organizing committee members and NASA are very thankful these families. Dr. Barlow and Associates and Mr. Hardial Jandu covered the cost partially by agreeing to advertise during the event. We are thankful to them as well. We also thank all the members who donated \$20 per family to cover the cost. In addition, we thank all the volunteers who worked diligently to make this event very successful. In the end, if there was any deficit, it was taken over by NASA. Finally, the pictures of this event are published in the NASA webpage.

## **New Life Members of NASA**

**NASA BOD welcomes the following life members to NASA:**

1. Dr. Janardhan and Vijaya Janardhan, Manchester CT

2. Bangalore Neelakantiah and Leelavathi Neelakantiah, Wallingford CT
3. Channasandra Nagaraj and Sudha Nagaraj, Southwindsor CT
4. Nagaraja Rudrapatna, Anupama Nagaraja, Akshatha Rudrapatna, Nagaprasada Rudrapatna (Canada)
5. Bettadapura Sheshachala, Vinutha Sheshachacala, Kushal Sheshachala, Nidhishree Sheshachala (Canada)
6. Sri Sreekanth, Sudha Subbanna, Supritha Sreekanth, Susmitha Sreekanth (Canada)
7. Sandhya Magge (Former NASA Board Member)
8. Dr Raghu Ram and Pavani Ram, Williamsville NY (Raghu is son of Shri Subbanna of Buffalo NY)

### **Correction 2006 GBM Minutes published in July 2006 Volume 23 No. 3 Newsletter:**

- a. The election of new office bearers for 2006-2008 constituted an important business item in the GBM agenda and was inadvertently omitted from the minutes reported in the last issue of our newsletter. Official copy of the minutes in the NASA files has been updated to include this item.
- b. It appears that the Item #20 statement as appearing in the minutes published in the newsletter is liable to misinterpretation and hence has been omitted from the final version of the minutes in the NASA files.

### **A request to all NASA members and non-members:**

***E-mail communications help NASA to send you advance copies of some of our notifications and newsletters. If your email address has changed or if you would like us to include your or your friends' email addresses in the distribution list, please send us a note with the current email address (es) to mahesh.rao@alumni.duke.edu. If you have been receiving communication from NASA and your email address is correct no action is required.***

### **Community news:**

- Sponsorship of Sankethi Sangama: With the support from Prof. Dathatri, NASA has taken a Monthly Sponsorship of Sankethi Sangama for the month of July 2007.
- NASA past President Srikantiah took the initiative to send a check for \$100 to NASA to be sent to a local charity with a request that NASA make a matching donation to a local cause. NASA is sending a check for \$200 to a local charity in Baltimore-Washington DC during this holiday season.
- Asha (Rangappa's daughter) and Andy had a baby boy on the evening of 11/21/06. His name is Paras Nikhil Dodd. The birth went well and both mom and baby are healthy. He is 8 lbs even, 22 inches long. Everyone, including Dad, is doing great. Congratulations!
- Bharatanatyam Arangetram of Tara Magge was held on August 26, 2006 in Pittsburgh. Please visit <http://www.sankethi.org/Events/2006/TaraMagge.pdf> for details. Expect to see her Dance Performance in our upcoming NASA event in 2007!
- Rangapravesha of Chinmayi Bettadapura was held on August 13, 2006 at Santa Clara, CA. Please visit [http://www.sankethi.org/Events/2006/chinmayio\\_dance%20review.pdf](http://www.sankethi.org/Events/2006/chinmayio_dance%20review.pdf) for details.





**Y.S. Shamanna**

We are sad to hear of the loss of an esteemed Sankethi, Y.S. Shamanna, who recently passed away in Bangalore after a brief illness at the age of 89 years. He is survived by his wife, son and daughter, and their families. He was a decorated policeman and he retired as a Deputy Superintendent of Police in the Central Bureau of Investigation. Shamanna was decorated with many awards and medals:

The Maharaja's Police medal (which in those times was given to only one person in the entire state), The Police medal for meritorious Service, and President's Police and Fire Services medal for distinguished service to name a few.

Shamanna was considered an expert at solving very difficult crimes and judges were able to offer judgments easily as his work was very thorough. Apart from being a policeman, he was a poet, a gymnast and an ace swimmer as well. Many of his articles were published in both Kannada and English dailies including Deccan Herald, Times of India and Indian Express.

Shamanna's life was one of dedication, discipline, and values. He was very principled and this made him a role model for many. NASA conveys its heartfelt condolences to his family.



**R.R. Keshava Murthy**

R.R. Keshava Murthy, renowned violinist and a famous Sankethi, passed away recently. He was 93 years old. He was born in 1914. He started learning music at a very early age and gave concerts at the tender age of 8. He is survived by his son, 6 daughters, several grandchildren, and many students. R.R.K., as he was popularly known, was a disciple of Bidaram Krishnappa, who was also the guru of his contemporary violinist, T. Chowdiah. R.R.K. was said to be the only one in the country to have mastered playing the seven-stringed violin.

R.R.K. was the recipient of several awards, including the Kanaka Purandara Award, the Karnataka Rajyotsava Award, Sangeetha Vidya Saagara and Sangeetha Shiromani (received from Sringeri Mahaswamigal) and the Sangeet Natak Academy

Award. He wrote over 10 books on "Sangeetha Lakshya Lakshana." Several of his students, such as T. Rukmini and Bhuvaneshwaraiah, have gone on to become renowned violinists.

RRK was an A-Grade artist of All India Radio (AIR). He was head of the audition board at the AIR. He was an expert on bowing and fingering techniques. He had attended several conferences and made paper presentations and demonstrations. Some of his favorite ragas were Kharaharapriya, Kaanada, Athana, Begade and Kedara Goula.

One of his daughters, Mrs. Lakshmi Nagaraj, who also plays the 7-stringed violin, has given concerts in India, USA, and Singapore. Another of his disciples was the renowned musician, the late Vidwan Sri. Ramasastry (father of Smt. Geetha Dathatri in the US). RRK was a strict disciplinarian. He used to conduct Tyagaraja Aradhana and Vijaya Dashami on a grand scale in his home.

While he was a popular solo artist, he had also accompanied several artistes like Shemangudi Srinivasa Iyer, R. K. Srikantan, Balamurali Krishna, and T. R. Mahalingam.

RRK loved sweets and one of his favorite ways to relax was by playing cards (rummy) with his sons-in-law and grandchildren. He was great musician, a great Sankethi, and a great musical guru. He will be greatly missed by all.



We are once again including below a copy of the NASA Aims and Objectives to remind ourselves of what NASA stands for and to keep our activities and pursuits in that perspective:

**NASA AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:** (From NASA bylaws Article II – purposes)

- a. To provide a forum for the members of the community to meet frequently and maintain religious, cultural, educational and social activities.
- b. To encourage the younger generation to understand the culture, language, and family relationships.
- c. To bring about a formal relationship with Sankethi Associations in the various parts of the world and participate in their activities suitably.
- d. To assist religious and cultural institutions in North America and elsewhere.
- e. To promote religious, social, cultural, educational exchange of scholars and artists from different parts of the world.
- f. To establish a charity fund for the benefit of cultural, educational and human service of economically disadvantaged people of the world.
- g. To aid in the education of the community children through suitable means.
- h. To sponsor suitable cultural programs of interest to members.
- i. To sponsor summer camps / trips for the youth.
- j. To increase the awareness of contribution of Sankethis to the society and country.

